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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000150

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BARBORIAK  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DPP CHAIRMANSHIP

1. Summary: Major Chinese-language Taiwan dailies focused their coverage January 14-17 on Sunday's DPP chairman race, possible candidates for the next premier, and the year-end Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral elections. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a front-page news story January 16 headlined: "DPP Chairman Elected; [Chen Shui-bian], Yu [Shyi-kun] and Su [Tseng-chang] Form a Golden Triangle." The newspaper also carried a banner headline on its page two January 17 that read: "Su [Tseng-chang Takes] up [the Premiership] and Frank Hsieh Steps Down; Bian's Focus Falls on Implementing [the Policies Announced in His] New Year's Day Address." The pro-unification "United Daily News," in the meantime, ran a front-page news story January 17 with the headline: "Bian Met with [Premier Frank] Hsieh Late Last Night. It Is Settled That Hsieh Will Step Down."

2. Almost all newspapers editorialized on former Presidential Office Secretary-General Yu Shyi-kun's election as the new DPP chairman Sunday. Editorials in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" and "Taipei Times" (English-language paper) both said Yu's major task is to restore the DPP members' faith in the party and to carry out the policies President Chen announced in his New Year's Day address. A "United Daily News" editorial, however, cautioned Chen that with only 25,000 votes for Yu, he should not deem it as a stamp of approval from DPP members for his future political route. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" also predicted that "with the Chen-Yu team, politics in Taiwan will continue to be vicious and divisive while cross-strait relations will remain tense." End summary.

A) "[We] Expect Chairman Yu [Shyi-kun] to Push for and Help Carry out [President Chen Shui-bian's] New Year's Day Address"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] wrote in an editorial (1/16):

"We hope the newly elected DPP Chairman Yu [Shyi-kun] will stick to Taiwan's position, pushing for and helping the government to carry out [President Chen Shui-bian's] New Year's Day address. All the more, we hope that Yu will take on not only the job of reviving the DPP's image but also the task of ensuring the safety and well-being of the 23 million [Taiwan] people."

B) "Yu's Challenge: Restore Faith"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (1/17):

"It was sad to see a political party with a glorious past such as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) register a voter turnout of just 19.96 percent in its chairmanship election on Sunday. It was an indication of the DPP rank and file's indifference to the election and the party's leadership should take note. .

"In the face of these challenges, Yu's role is crucial. He must transcend factional disputes within the party and listen to the grassroots. Only in this way will he be able to act as a conduit between ordinary party members and the leadership, and regain the trust of the rank and file. He also has to rebuild the party's image and be willing to adopt strict measures against any colleagues who are guilty of corruption. ."

C) "Chen Shui-bian Cannot Possibly Break All the Deadlocks with a Victory of 25,000 Votes"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (1/16):

"Yu Shyi-kun was elected DPP chairman with only 25,000 votes and a total voter turnout of less than 20 percent. At this time when the DPP is facing a severe situation both inside and outside the party, one would say that such a low vote count and voter turnout reflect the strong divisions and doubts inside the DPP rather than providing a clear answer

to the DPP. .

"Perhaps Yu's victory of 25,000 votes cannot be viewed as an indicator or bargaining chips for Chen Shui-bian to determine his future political route after all. The DPP chairmanship race will lose its significance if Yu's victory fails to become a turning point for the party to re-gain its past glory."

D) "Yu to Enhance Chen's Rule"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] wrote in an editorial (1/17):

". Despite the low turnout, Yu's election was needed to boost President Chen's standing, whose approval rating has dropped to 13 percent. Yu's mission is to rally the DPP's fundamentalist following to back up the president's posture in resisting power-sharing pressures from within the DPP as well as opposition parties. Chen refuses to be a lame duck president. ..

"In his New Year's Day speech, the president revived his independence agenda - to write a new Taiwan Constitution this year, put it for referendum next year and full implementation in 2008 when his term ends. He also called for 'active management' and 'effective opening' over Taiwan's investments in the mainland, a reversal of his proclaimed policy. The agenda was 'wishful thinking;' he knows he can't do it, nobody can do it. Because the U.S. won't allow it.

"With the Chen-Yu team, politics in Taiwan will continue to be vicious and divisive while cross-strait relations will remain tense. And Washington and Beijing will be annoyed for two more years. So will be Taiwan's people and economy."

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